

**DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL**

*The California Highway Patrol is a law enforcement and traffic safety agency reporting to Business, Transportation and Housing Agency Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet and Governor Gray Davis.*



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***CHP URGES COOL, CALM, COLLECTED DRIVING OVER LABOR DAY HOLIDAY***

(SACRAMENTO) Summer's last big outing starts Friday – and millions of California motorists headed for Labor Day relaxation spots need to keep driving safety in mind, according to California Highway Patrol (CHP) Deputy Commissioner Alex R. Jones.

“With all those people headed for fun, there will also be crowded highways and congested traffic. Mixing these factors with alcohol, speed and lack of safety belts can lead to a lethal situation,” the Deputy Commissioner said.

The CHP's Labor Day weekend enforcement, which begins at 6:01 p.m. Friday, August 31, and concludes at midnight Monday, Sept. 3, will be a Maximum Enforcement Period. “While most Californians will be taking it easy, all available CHP officers will be working this weekend,” he said.

The CHP will also participate with states across the nation in Operation C.A.R.E. (Combined Accident Reduction Effort), a special safety emphasis on the major interstate routes. C.A.R.E. highways in California are I-80, I-40, I-15 (east from San Bernardino), and I-5 (from Bakersfield north).

During last year's Labor Day holiday, 39 people died on the state's highways and the CHP arrested 1,320 motorists for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI).

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With more than 90 percent of California's motoring public wearing safety belts, the CHP will be keeping an eye out for drivers or passengers who still haven't gotten the message. "Everybody needs to wear a safety belt in every vehicle, on every trip – no matter how short," the deputy commissioner added. "And children too young for an adult belt should be properly buckled into a child safety seat now and a booster seat when they're older."

Starting Jan. 1, 2002, the use of booster seats won't be an option. Next year the law will require that children "graduate" from a safety seat to a booster seat – a device designed to provide much greater protection for their smaller size than an adult safety belt. Child passengers under 6 years of age or 60 pounds will be covered by the new law.

"In addition to DUI, speed and safety belts, CHP officers will especially watch for aggressive driving behavior because of the hazard it poses for the motoring public," the deputy commissioner said.

The four most common triggers for aggressive driving are cutting people off, changing lanes without signaling, tailgating, and driving too slowly in the left lane. Much of the risk of encountering aggressive driving can be avoided by being patient, courteous and tolerant of other drivers. "After all, a negative reaction to other motorist's poor driving skills is not worth risking your life or the lives of your passengers," Jones added.

The deputy commissioner had one final comment on the upcoming holiday, "Don't react to aggressive driving – keep cool, avoid alcohol, and buckle up. Make this Labor Day weekend one to remember for all of the right reasons."

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